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## SPECIAL ANALYSES

## IRAN-IRAQ: Military Strengths and Weaknesses

by [ ] CIA

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*Iraq has substantially more equipment than Iran in nearly every conventional category, but Baghdad's static defensive strategy has permitted Iran to seize the military initiative and use its infantry and artillery to best advantage. Iran has been aided by the incompetence of senior Iraqi officers and the low morale of many Iraqi reserve and militia units. Baghdad's forces, however, appear to be using their strengths more effectively in the battle around Al Basrah than they did earlier this year at Dezful and Khorramshahr, where they suffered humiliating defeats.* [ ]

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The fighting is taking place on a flat, open plain, which is ideal for use of armor and unsuited to massed infantry. Baghdad has deployed over 1,200 armored vehicles on the Al Basrah front. [ ]

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The Iraqis have strongly fortified the area and brought in regular Army infantry units rather than the militia and reserve troops they relied on in previous battles. Iraq also has concentrated more than 400 heavy artillery pieces in the Al Basrah area to negate the advantage in artillery fire Iran enjoyed in earlier battles. [ ]

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Iran's forces appear to have been overconfident, relying on poor Iraqi morale to cause a collapse of the Iraqi defenses at the beginning of the invasion. As a result, Iranian commanders have made crucial mistakes and Iran now finds itself locked into a set-piece battle that favors defense. Iraq's massed weapons are able to inflict significant losses on Iran's infantry and remaining armor. [ ]

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Ground Forces

Iran's greatest strength is the fanaticism of its infantrymen, primarily Revolutionary Guards and militia troops, and their effective use in combined arms

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operations. The Guard and the militia are at least as numerous as the regular Army and are drawn principally from staunch supporters of the regime. They generally are equipped as light infantry, although some Revolutionary Guard armored units have been formed. [redacted]

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The Revolutionary Guard and militia are used to lead Iranian assaults to achieve initial breakthroughs that are then exploited by regular Army units. Motivated by Shia Islam, which exalts martyrdom, the Guard and militia are willing to suffer extremely heavy casualties in human-wave assaults on Iraqi armored positions. [redacted]

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The incompetence of Iraq's senior commanders has been a major Iraqi weakness. Iraqi generals, many of whom hold their positions because of political loyalty rather than military competence, have been unable in past battles to assess correctly the terrain or anticipate the major avenues of Iranian attacks. Overall direction of the Iraqi defense by senior commanders has been weak, especially their use of reserve forces. [redacted]

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The Iranian officer corps has been heavily purged by the Khomeini regime. Many of the current officers, who have risen through the ranks during the war, appear competent. [redacted]

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#### Armor and Artillery

Iraq has defeated the Iranians in the few armored battles that have been fought. [redacted]

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Baghdad's forces have a nearly 3-to-1 advantage in tanks and armored personnel carriers overall and a 2-to-1 advantage in armored vehicles in the fighting around Al Basrah. The quality of the armor inventories is about equal, although the Iraqis probably are able to keep more of their vehicles running. [redacted]

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Iran has had a clear edge in the quality and often the quantity of its artillery support, despite Iraq's larger artillery inventory. The Iranians consistently have concentrated their artillery fire at key points on

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the front while Iraqi fire has been dispersed. Moreover, much of Iran's artillery is self-propelled and able to move rapidly, while most of Iraqi artillery is towed and usually in static positions. [redacted]

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### The Air War

Both Air Forces have been largely ineffective. The Iranians have been severely weakened by the cutoff of spare parts and replacement parts from the US. They also continue to face a maintenance problem. [redacted]

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Tehran has only about 100 operational fighter aircraft remaining and can ill afford to lose many in large raids inside Iraq or over the battlefield. As a result, the Iranians conduct small, high-profile raids similar to the bombing of Baghdad on Wednesday. [redacted]

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Iraq still has about 300 operational fighter aircraft and has been receiving replacements from both the USSR and France. Since last fall, the Iraqis have become more aggressive in air operations but have been unable to turn their numerical superiority into an advantage in the ground fighting. Iranian ground attacks always take place at night when the Iraqi Air Force rarely operates. [redacted]

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The Iraqis lack the specialized munitions needed to break up Iranian infantry attacks or to hit heavily defended local targets such as bridges. Most Iraqi pilots are poorly trained. [redacted]

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Iraq has a clear advantage in air defense but cannot prevent small Iranian air raids. Iran has much less operational air defense equipment but is able to concentrate enough weapons to defend critical targets such as Khark Island. [redacted]

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The Iranians cannot prevent large-scale Iraqi raids on Tehran and other cities. Iraqi air attacks in the last week have caused over 1,000 civilian casualties. [redacted]

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Since the beginning of the war, Iraqi ground fire has brought down most of the approximately 175 fighter aircraft the Iranians have lost. The Iranians have downed about 100 Iraqi planes. [redacted]

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Iran-Iraq War: Oil Facility Vulnerabilities  
and The Oil Market

The war raises serious risks to the oil market, especially if it spills over to Kuwait, Saudi Arabia or the United Arab Emirates.

- o On Sunday Tehran repeated warnings to the Persian Gulf countries against helping Iraq in its war with Iran. These threats have not been specifically directed against oil installations.
- o In early October 1981, however, Iranian fighters attacked and severely damaged the largest gas-oil separation plant in Kuwait in an effort to dissuade the Kuwaitis from their strong support of Iraq.
- o Iran might again attack the oil facilities of other Persian Gulf countries--out of frustration if the conflict with Iraq bogs down, to retaliate for support given to Baghdad, or for a successful Iraqi attack on Kharg Island, Iran's main oil export terminal. [REDACTED] 25X1

The oil facilities in the Persian Gulf countries are extremely vulnerable to disruption by sabotage and naval or air attack.

- o Iran and Iraq. Although there has been no new critical damage to oil facilities as a result of the recent fighting, the continued flow of significant quantities of oil remains dependent on the operation of Kharg Island and the Iraq-Turkey pipeline. 25X1
- o Kuwait. By far the most critical and vulnerable Kuwaiti petroleum choke points are the terminal loading facilities at Ahmadi; if lost Kuwait would be unable to export any crude.

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- o Saudi Arabia. The Saudi oil production and export system is extremely vulnerable to attack because of the large number of critical choke points. The most important of these installations are the Ras Tanura and Ju 'aymah export terminals in the Persian Gulf which constitute all but 2 million b/d of Saudi export capacity. Other key targets include the processing facilities at Abqaiq as well as coastal and offshore installations for gas-oil separation.
- o Abu Dhabi. The Jebel Dhanna oil export terminal is the only outlet for onshore crude oil production. Onshore production currently accounts for about 60 percent of total output. Offshore production and processing take place at several locations, the most important of which is Das Island.

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### The Oil Market

Because world supplies are plentiful at the moment the market could absorb the loss of both Iranian and Iraqi oil exports.

- o A spread in the conflict and damage to key oil facilities in neighboring states, however, would tighten the market and force up prices. Excess oil capacity outside the Persian Gulf amounts to only 3 million b/d, compared with current Gulf production of more than 12 million b/d.
- o A stalemated conflict would leave the market soft for the rest of the year.

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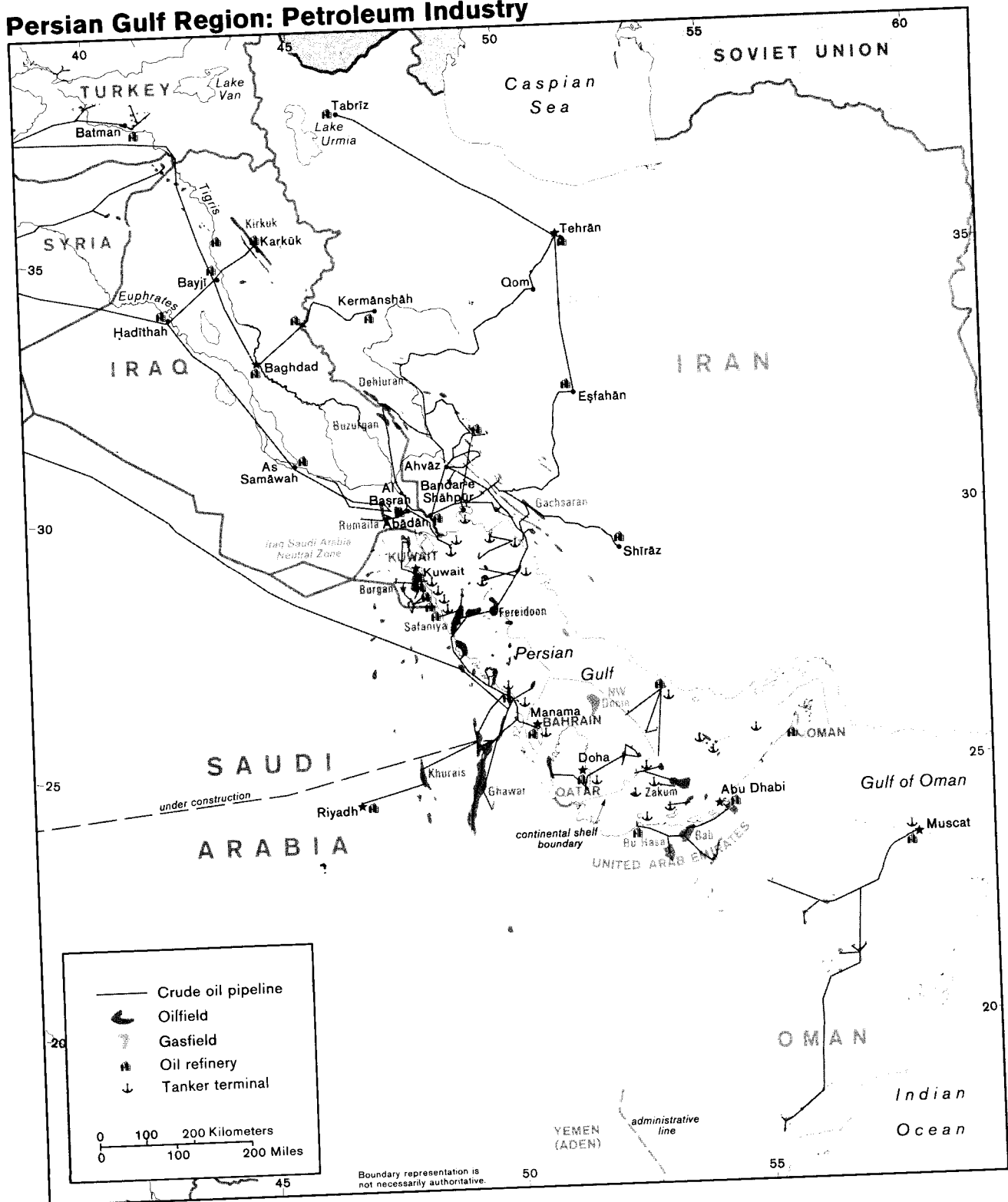
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# Persian Gulf Region: Petroleum Industry



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**Figure 1**  
**Oilfields and Shia/Sunni Muslims in Iraq**



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